MATTER OUT OF PLACE: PARADIGMS FOR ANALYZING TEXTILE CLEANING

MARY M. BROOKS AND DINAH EASTOP

ABSTRACT—The approaches and judgments used in conservation cleaning, as well as in domestic cleaning, have developed as part of a social process. This paper identifies four paradigms that have influenced textile conservation cleaning: the domestic, the sacred and heroic, the art-historical, and the evidential. The domestic paradigm is based on a link that usually remains uncontested, between cleanliness and social and/or moral worth, as demonstrated by examples drawn from literature. The effects of the other three paradigms are demonstrated through analysis of published case studies. Recognizing the contextual relationships of these influential paradigms enables curators and conservators to overtly debate and more fully document decisions about conservation cleaning.

TITRE—'Matière hors contexte:' paradigmes dans l'analyse du nettoyage des textiles RÉSUMÉ—Les démarches et les opinions impliquées lors du nettoyage des textiles, en restauration ou domestiquement, ont évolué en tant que processus social. Cet article identifie quatre paradigmes qui ont influencé le nettoyage des textiles à des fins de restauration. Ce sont les paradigmes du domestique, du sacré et de l'héroïque, de l'histoire de l'art, et de l'évidence. Le paradigme domestique est basé sur le lien généralement incontesté entre la propreté et la valeur sociale et/ou morale, tel qu'exemplifié dans la littérature. Les effets des trois autres paradigmes sont démontrés à travers l'analyse d'études de cas qui sont déjà apparus dans des publications. Reconnaître les relations contextuelles de ces importants paradigmes permet aux conservateurs et aux restaurateurs de débattre plus ouvertement des décisions prises au sujet des nettoyages et à ces décisions d'être mieux documentées.

TITULO—"Algo fuera de lugar:" paradigmas para analizar la limpieza de textiles RESUMEN—Los enfoques y apreciaciones utilizados en la limpieza en conservación, tanto como para la limpieza doméstica, se han desarrollado como en de un proceso social. Este trabajo identifica cuatro paradigmas que han influenciado la limpieza de textiles en conservación: el doméstico, el sagrado y heroico, el artístico-histórico y el probatorio. El paradigma doméstico está basado en un lazo entre limpieza y valor social y/o moral que habitualmente no se cuestiona, como se demuestra por ejemplos que se extraen de la literatura. Los efectos de los otros tres paradigmas se demuestran a través del análisis de estudios de casos publicados. El reconocimiento de las relaciones contextuales de estos influyentes paradigmas posibilita que las decisiones sobre limpieza en conservación sean debatidas más abiertamente por curadores y conservadores y que sean documentadas en forma más completa.

TÍTULO—"Coisas fora de lugar:" paradigmas de análise de limpeza de tecido RESUMO—As abordagens e critérios utilizados em limpeza de conservação, assim como em limpeza doméstica, se desenvolveram como parte de um processo social. Este artigo identifica quatro paradigmas que influenciaram a limpeza de conservação de tecido: o doméstico, o sagrado e heróico, o arte-histórico e o evidente. O paradigma doméstico é baseado num elo que geralmente se mantém incontestável, entre limpeza e valor social e/ou moral, como demonstrado por exemplos retirados da literatura. Os efeitos dos outros três paradigmas são demonstrados através de análise de estudos de caso publicados. Reconhecer a relação contextual desses paradigmas influentes permite que decisões sobre limpeza de conservação sejam mais abertamente discutidas por curadores e conservadores e sejam detalhadamente documentadas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Categorical distinctions between clean and dirty are not fixed but are culturally defined, which means they alter over time, space, and context. Such categorizations may remain implicit in the value judgments made by curators and conservators undertaking assessments of the significance and condition of textile artifacts. For best professional practice and good communication for museum practitioners and users alike, these cultural assumptions need to be both recognized and questioned. This paper, which develops ideas presented by the same authors in 1996, seeks to identify dominant paradigms in conservation practice as expressed in textile cleaning.

The insights of the social anthropologist Douglas in her influential 1966 text *Purity and Danger* provide a useful conceptual framework for exploring changes in conservation cleaning practices. Douglas analyzed "rituals of purity and impurity" (1984, 2) as a means of ordering the world in both conceptual and physical terms. Relating pollution beliefs to social order is relevant to conservation approaches to cleaning.

Douglas famously described soiling as disorder, which is to say "matter out of place" (1984, 40), a phrase also used by Rice of the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C. (1964). Deciding whether to clean a textile will be influenced by a sense, whether consciously or unconsciously expressed, of what the piece should be like. "In chasing dirt. . .[we] are positively reordering our environment, making it conform to an idea" (1984, 2).

This sense of the correct appearance or form of a textile may be articulated in a variety of ways (Herald and Brooks 1995). The complexity of the ways in which this correctness is viewed depends on the fact that all culturally significant objects are socially ambiguous. Clavir (1994) acknowledges this when she argues that preventive conservation practices need to take account of an object's dynamic social environment, as well as its dynamic physical environment. Recognizing the nonmaterial properties of a culturally significant artifact changes the approaches to both interventive and preventive conservation. In other words, what might in some contexts be considered as matter out of place actually becomes meaningful matter. Perceptions of cleanliness are therefore not absolute. There are various agendas that may agree or conflict. In a postmodern world, each perspective needs to be recognized and evaluated.

2. CLEANING PARADIGMS

If it is accepted that dirtiness and cleanliness are culturally and socially determined, what value systems are in operation when conservation cleaning is undertaken? The answer to the question, "why clean?" is unlikely to be straightforward. Tracing the various strands in decision-making elucidates the evolving ideologies of conservation cleaning. Four distinctive cleaning paradigms have been identified:

- Domestic: approaches dominated by the ethos of hygiene and household laundry
- Sacred and heroic: approaches adopted for relics, whether sacred (e.g., the vestments of saints) or secular (e.g., the dress of rulers, heroes, and heroines)
- Art-historical: approaches influenced by aesthetics or ideas of authenticity
- Evidential: approaches prioritizing historical, forensic, or legal valuc(s) attributed to soiling.

The first of these paradigms is illustrated by examples drawn from literature. The latter three are illustrated using a range of published textile conservation case studies. In order to highlight the complexity of attitudes to matter out of place, textiles have been selected that are associated with the prominent and the powerful: two kings, Christian IV of Denmark and Charles I of England; two American presidents, Lincoln and Clinton; and a president's wife, Jacqueline Kennedy.

2.1 THE DOMESTIC PARADIGM: LINKING CLEANLINESS WITH SOCIAL AND MORAL WORTH

Before analyzing textile conservation case studies, it is important to analyze the dominant domestic paradigm. "A clean slate" and "washing your dirty linen in public" are common phrases that reveal attitudes to dirtiness and cleanliness. Understanding these sayings depends on a shared cultural attitude to cleanliness. A clean slate implies writing has been removed from the slate (writing board) indicating a fresh start that is implicitly a good thing. In contrast, the public washing of linen, implicitly either personal undergarments or bed clothing, exposes something soiled and therefore shameful; such public display of soiled cloth is undesirable. Superficially, a textile needs to be cleaned because it is "dirty." However, as Douglas argues, deciding what is dirty is culturally defined, and moral properties are ascribed to states of dirtiness and cleanliness.

The idea of cleanliness and goodness as the polar opposites of dirtiness and badness is deeply embedded in many cultures. Cleanliness is not just godly, it is also an indicator of social status. Bernard Shaw's heroine Eliza Dolittle in *Pygmalion* (1916) had to be washed before she could be made into a lady. In Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice,* Elizabeth Bennett's muddy petticoat is held up by the Bingley sisters as an indicator of her character of —"conceited independence"—and her provincial "indifference to decorum": "Yes, and her petticoat; I hope you saw her petticoat, six inches deep in mud. . .and the gown which had been let down to hide it, not doing its office" (Austen [1813] 1975, 38).

Goodness may also be conferred upon the maker of cleanliness; for example, *The Maid of All-Work's Prayer* links the task of washing with moral purity (Davidson 1986). Physical cleanliness is linked to sexual purity. The words "slut" and "slovenly" connote both poor personal hygiene and promiscuity. Bohemians, beatniks, hippies, punks, and followers of grunge have all articulated the language of dirt as the language of social rebellion (Eastop and Brooks 1996).

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When making decisions to clean, curators and conservators may be seen as guardians of social and moral order. Finch attributed the "beginning of textile conservation, as distinct from darning and patching" (2000, 10) to the Pietas Association in Sweden (von der Lippe 1985), founded in 1908 for the purpose of "saving the textile treasures of the country through competent conservation/restoration practised under scholarly control" (Finch 2000, 9). One important goal was the maintenance of church vestments that could include ensuring that these were serviceable and clean. The underlying symbolism of such cleaning is important. It is a moral act that "saves" treasures that themselves may be linked with religious practice.

Domestic Science (Home Economics) training has been the springboard for some notable textile conservators. However, conservators, while recognizing the domestic tradition, stress the distinction between conservation cleaning and "housewifely" cleaning. As Hofenk de Graaff puts it, "Housewives' ideas about cleaning have nothing to do with cleaning of ancient textiles" (1980, 62) although most textile conservators are familiar with the public's elision of domestic washing and textile conservation wet cleaning. Conservation cleaning techniques do differ from those of the housewife but it is important to recognize that the underlying—and often unstated—assumptions about the moral value of cleanliness may influence conservation decisions.

Some contemporary artists invert the morally positive connotations of domestic cleaning. For example, the textile artist Julie Ryder exploits the natural dyestuffs produced by micro-organisms to form the basis of her stained "surface-design" samplers "worked" on antique kimono silk to create a "material archive of the past." Staining, often viewed as evidence of "domestic mismanagement," thus becomes the artwork (Hemmings 2004, 16).

To summarize, the domestic paradigm affects all of life and therefore inevitably affects conservation practice. For the pioneering generation of textile conservators, the domestic paradigm may appear to have been dominant. It is still appropriate in some cases, for example, where white cotton vestments or table linen in historic houses are still in use. Here the role of the textiles is to represent godly and/or hygienic purity, as in the Pietas tradition. When its power is not recognized and it remains unexamined, this paradigm may be influential by default, with the result that textiles may undergo cleaning for reasons other than their long-term preservation.

2.2 THE RELIC PARADIGM: THE SACRED AND THE HEROIC

Violent death or injury may be used to create powerful mythologies that can be manifested in material forms, such as bloodstained textiles. These may be treasured as relics. As Sorkin has noted, stains "function as both remainder and reminder of what has come to pass: both evidence and memory" (2000–01, 78).

When the Danish King Christian IV (1577–1648) was wounded in a naval battle against Sweden on July 1, 1644, he had his bloodstained shirt and other garments preserved. The bloodstains have functioned as evidence of his bravery since they were first taken to Rosenborg Castle, Copenhagen, shortly after the battle; they have been on public view since 1833 (Johansen 1990). These "unclean" garments demonstrate his injury, bravery, and survival. In contrast, the bloodstained textiles associated with Charles I of England (1600–1649) function as relics of his beheading by order of Parliament. Staniland has made a special study of the textiles associated with Charles's execution. She analyzes the fascination that such relics exert, noting that such "personal belongings become transferred into cherished memorabilia, mystical embodiments of the deceased" (1999, 41). Some owners have sought scientific verification of their belief that these stained objects are true relics of Charles's death. For example, attempts have been made to analyze the DNA on the stained cloth purported to have covered Charles's decapitated body and subsequently preserved by his attendants John and William Ashburnham (Whistler 1888; Röhl et al. 1998).

Jacqueline Kennedy showed an instinctive understanding of the symbolic value of matter out of place when she refused to change her bloodstained Chanel suit for Lyndon Johnson's inauguration on Airforce 1 following the assassination of her husband President Kennedy on November 22, 1963. The new widow emphatically rejected suggestions that she should change clothes. Lubin's analysis (2003) highlights the semiotic force of this act both for Jacqueline Kennedy and for the public, arguing that she used the blood as a message to the world: "No," she said. "Let them see what they've done" (Smith 2004, 440). The bloodstained suit made a powerful political statement, and a poignant personal gesture as well, as Jacqueline Kennedy was known to be "fanatical. . .about changing a blouse or skirt with a small spot" (440).

Her mother, Janet Auchincloss, also recognized

the iconic importance of the "precious blood" on the suit (464). She asked her daughter's maid not to clean the suit. Instead, "she placed the suit in a box marked 'worn by Jackie 11-22-63' in the attic of her Georgetown home alongside the box containing Jackie's wedding dress. (The pink suit eventually went to the National Archives to be kept in storage for one hundred years)" (464). Auchincloss is reported to have said, "I had a feeling that this was the last link" (464). The wedding dress and the Chanel suit provided vivid tangible evidence of the start and the end of her daughter's marriage to John F. Kennedy.

Caked mud operates with similar iconic power on the uniform of Private George Giles, a World War I soldier. His uniform has been preserved as a relic of both heroism and misery (figs. 1, 2). Dr. Charles Bean, founder of the Australian War Memorial (AWM) collection, encountered Giles as the soldier was returning from the front line in 1918. Bean deliberately collected Giles' soiled uniform as evidence of the experience and conditions of trench warfare. Preserving the mud was a particular goal of the 1987 conservation treatment since the significance of the uniform lies in the mud (Dodds 1988). This is important for a collection that functions both as memorial and museum. Dodds was one of the first conservators to report the consolidation of mud and to explore the rationale behind this (Eastop and Brooks 1996). This treatment approach has continued to inform conservation interventions at the AWM (e.g. Clayton et al. 2003).

To summarize, royal blood, presidential blood, and the Somme mud have become what Landi calls "'holy dirt' which has become part of the history of the object and, as such, must not be removed" (1985, 29). The evidential paradigm has become significantly more important in textile conservation practice. This suggests that the domestic approach (i.e., if a textile is dirty, it needs to be cleaned) no longer goes unquestioned. This development has been greatly informed by developments in ethnographic conservation practice (Orlofsky and Trupin 1993). Conservation cleaning proposals therefore must engage the issue of balancing physical benefits to the artifacts against changes in symbolic value.

2.3 THE ART-HISTORICAL PARADIGM

The art-historical paradigm focuses on recovering the form of a textile and/or its aesthetics and

Fig. 1. Private George Giles, a World War I soldier in his uniform. Two diggers of the 5th Division, 4172 Private (Pte) George James Giles, 29th Battalion (left) and 4015 Pte John Wallace Anderton, 32nd Battalion, just out of the trenches, in full kit with mud. Pte Giles' entire uniform and rifle are held by the Australian War Memorial. Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial, Negative Number E02818

Fig. 2. The front of Giles' tunic with mud from the Somme. Courtesy of the Australian War Memorial, relic number RELAWM04500.003

hence establishing its status within the art-historical canon. Durian-Rees expressed this approach very clearly when she asked, "What art historian would not want to have a textile work of art cleaned—providing its state allows it—or have at the least the superficial stains removed from the surface of a historic fabric whose colours have already suffered from the process of aging?" (1980, 192).

The conservation strategy developed for a Coptic tapestry-weave panel illustrates this approach because its treatment was heavily influenced by art-historical considerations (Krüger 1999; Eastop and Brooks 1999). The small panel, which had been excavated from a grave, probably once formed part of a tunic. It was of interest because it was linked to a number of surviving panels depicting scenes from the life of Joseph shown on a red background (figs. 3, 4). When presented for treatment, it was hard to distinguish the design due to ingrained, dark brown staining, assumed to be from the corpse (which the tunic once wrapped or covered). The curator's priority was to remove the disfiguring staining and creasing that prevented 'reading' of the design. In this case it was decided the aesthetic benefits of cleaning outweighed the potential loss of evidence from the stains and creases. The cleaning treatment was successful in revealing two scenes from the life of Joseph as told in the Book of Genesis, Joseph thrown into the well by his brothers, and Joseph dreaming of the wheat sheaves bowing down.

The removal of tarry deposits from the uniform worn by a page boy at the coronation of George IV (1762–1830) is also an example of this approach. The medieval style ermine-trimmed, red velvet coat had become soiled during storage in an attic. It seemed likely that sealant from the roof had melted during hot summers and transferred to the fur. It was considered important to remove this soiling as far as possible in order that the cleaned garment could represent the splendor of the royal coronation. In another context, the stain might have been considered evidence of its storage within the home of its aristocratic owner. In this case, removing soiling was considered essential to achieve the desired ideal state.

The art-historical paradigm has been championed by art historians and connoisseurs rightly

Fig. 3. A Coptic tapestry panel (500-700 A.D.) depicting scenes from the life of Joseph, before cleaning, detail. (WAG T.1994.140 TCC 2535.1) Image © Textile Conservation Centre. Courtesy of the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester

Fig. 4. A Coptic tapestry panel (500–700 A.D.) depicting scenes from the life of Joseph, after cleaning, detail. (WAG T.1994.140 TCC 2535.1) Image © Textile Conservation Centre. Courtesy of the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester

concerned that the object be seen as clearly as possible. Flury-Lemberg's seminal text *Textile Conservation and Research* (1988) demonstrates the benefits of this approach. However, contemporary art has focused attention on this paradigm and also demonstrated that the views of more stakeholders need to be considered, especially those of the artists themselves. One particular outcome is the legally enforced notion of preserving the artist's intent (Lennard and Dew 2004). This necessarily places cleaning decisions in yet another context.

To summarize, the importance of the art-historical paradigm may be attributed to the fact that Western society prioritizes the image in those artifacts that it defines as fine art. Some aspects of contemporary art are challenging this notion and conservation cleaning practice is responding accordingly.

2.4 THE EVIDENTIAL PARADIGM: HISTORICAL, FORENSIC, AND LEGAL

As has been demonstrated, soiling and creasing can be viewed in different ways. Soiling may be considered as an unwanted agent of deterioration that should be removed, or the same soiling could be considered a source of valuable information. Context is important here. A very creased and disfigured textile may require a soil-removal (cleaning) treatment if it is required for display in a museum dedicated to the history of design. In a different institution such as a museum dedicated to social history, ethnography, or archaeology, removal of the soiling might not even be considered if it has evidential value.

The motivation for retaining soiling may be because it is considered to have become part of the artifact and thus part of its meaning and value. Conservation recognizes that a balance needs to be achieved between the needs of the object and the potential historical value attributed to soiling. One attempt to reconcile the tension between retaining evidence and cleaning is particle sampling as advocated by Thomsen. "Recognition that flags are two sided historical documents that contain key information to their past is often ignored. Washing has removed the soils, pollens and other contaminant that tell us where the flag was and how it was used.

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Identification of the particulate matter has been critical in uncovering the identity of numerous very historically significant flags" (Thomsen 2003, 93).

Reviewing past treatments has played a central role in considering the evidential value of soiling. Finch (1984) provides a vivid example. British sailors were nicknamed "jolly jack tars" for their use of tar to waterproof ships. Finch has recorded her regret at removing tar from a pair of sailor's trousers because she no longer viewed it as unwanted soiling but as evidence of the trousers' use. In contrast, a concentration camp uniform worn at Auschwitz and now displayed at The Jewish Museum, London, was treated using a minimally interventive approach. With the support of the curator, the chosen method aimed to retain soiling, creasing, and physical damage resulting from use. No cleaning was undertaken, so the ingrained soils and stains remain *in situ*. Any humidification treatment used to relax partially the sharp creases formed during storage was restricted, in order to prevent soiling from shifting or being driven further into the fibers.

As noted by Thomsen above, soiling may help to contextualize artifacts. Three pieced and carved pinewood cornices, covered in a printed chintz fabric, may be the only surviving elements of an 18th-century Chippendale bed from Harewood House, Yorkshire, England (Brooks 2000). The fabric has a thick layer of once-white but now greenish-grey overpaint covering all the exposed areas of the previously white background (figs. 5, 6). Cross sections of these painted areas revealed a layer of dark, sooty soiling between the chintz and the paint. The house steward's record book reported that a chimney fire had taken place in one of the bedrooms at Harewood House. It seems likely that the smoke disfigured the chintz and that the sooty soiled areas of the chintz were covered by overpainting to recreate the effect of the original. Recognizing this soot as historical evidence, which helped identify the possible location of the bed in one of the bedroom suites at Harewood House, ensured that it was valued as being meaningful despite its obscuring the design of the chintz.

Some stains achieve legal significance. Lewinsky's navy blue dress has become world famous; for example, it was described in banner headlines as a "Sex Dress" by the *New York Daily News* and "Monica's Love Dress" in the *New York Post* (Grossman 1998). The legal and political implications of this stain were such that the DNA analysis was conducted by the FBI laboratory in secrecy. The domestic paradigm is evident in a statement made by Ginsburg, Lewinsky's lawyer: "I would assume that if Monica Lewinsky has a dress that was sullied or dirtied she would have had it cleaned" (Cohen 1998). No attempt appears to have been made to remove the stain. Some sources claim that Lewinsky told Tripp that she would "never wash it [the dress] again" (Grossman 1998), suggesting that the stained garment had special significance for her. However, during her 1998 testimony to the Grand Jury, Lewinsky stated that Tripp told her not to clean the dress in the autumn of 1997 because "it could be evidence some day." This suggests that Tripp thought of the stain as potential evidence, possibly in a legal context, although Lewinsky dismissed the notion, saying that she "would never need it" (*Houston Chronicle* 1998).

Fig. 5. Detail of cornice's central pendant showing the chintz-covered carved wood. Image © Textile Conservation Centre. Courtesy of The Chippendale Society

Fig. 6. Detail of top of cornice showing a protected part of the chintz, which therefore remains clean and unpainted. Image © Textile Conservation Centre. Courtesy of The Chippendale Society

Textiles associated with the shooting of President Lincoln have recently been subjected to intensive interdisciplinary debate. A key question is whether or not the stained textiles should be subjected to DNA analysis. The resulting debate highlights the importance of distinguishing what is technically possible in the way of analysis from that which is socially desirable. At this stage in the research, the decision was made not to subject these bloodstained textiles to DNA analysis (Buenger 2000).

In summary, the evidential paradigm recognizes that soiling may be of profound significance and that deciding to remove it will be influenced by the institutional, legal, and philosophical context as well as technological capacity. The evidential paradigm can function as a decision-making tool to interrogate the domestic and the art-historical paradigm. Appearance may not be all that matters.

3. IMPACT ON TEXTILE CONSERVATION PRACTICE

3.1 EFFECTS OF SOILING AND CLEANING

In many cases, wet cleaning to remove soiling from historical textiles is an important and necessary intervention. The rationale for such conservation cleaning draws on an understanding of the physical threats to a textile in terms of the damage that can result from soiling: exerting physical damage to fibers, contributing to damaging chemical reactions, and supporting pest infestations. In the pioneering series of workshop notes prepared at the Textile Museum, Washington, D.C., Greene stated, "We have come to the conclusion that most textiles can be washed and that modern scientific methods of cleaning can be applied to nearly all ancient textiles as satisfactorily as to modern ones." ([1950?], n.p.)

There is now extensive published research on aspects of the cleaning process, including the behavior of surfactants (e.g., Tímár-Balázsy 2001) and nonaqueous solvent cleaning. Information on materials and techniques has become much more widely available, discussed and studied, as is indicated by the survey undertaken in 1995 by the AIC Textile Speciality Group (Ewer 1995). This increasing technical sophistication has been accompanied by a growing awareness of the risks as well as the benefits of cleaning. Windsor's significant paper (1995) clearly accepted the irreversible nature of wet cleaning and the importance of reducing risk, arguing that improving the long-term preservation of the artifact should be the primary goal with aesthetic improvements a welcome, but secondary, benefit. One logical outcome of this position is the need for further research on the effect of leaving soiling in or on textile artifacts (Harrison 1998).

3.2 WHO DECIDES?

In their important paper, Orlofsky and Trupin (1993) recognized the complexity of decision-making in conservation interventions. Different stakeholders may define the value of an artifact in different elements—the object itself, the soiling, or in the evidence derived from this (Brooks et al. 1996). The question then becomes, who decides and how? A focused debate on the goal of cleaning interventions, balancing the needs of the object with the evidential value of soiling (perceived or potential) is important. Textile conservation has benefited from the discussions within ethnographic and archaeological conservation. All decisions need to be supported by documentation explicitly recording the rationales as well as what was done. Why a treatment was implemented—or was not implemented—should be as important as what the treatment actually was.

3.3 DEVELOPING REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

The historiography of conservation is small and that of textile conservation is even smaller (Eastop 2006). As greater stress in placed upon the development of self-reflective practice as part of professional development and accreditation (e.g., ICON Professional Accreditation of Conservator-Restorers detailed at www.pacr.org.uk), research in the history of practices gains greater significance. In a maturing conservation profession, some assumptions that had been previously often taken for granted are now being questioned (Muñoz Viñas 2002; Villers 2004). Recognizing a plurality of approaches means that the decision to clean or not to clean may be made according to context, and can thus become less of a moral decision than one that reflects the needs of the artifact and its users in its current and anticipated future context.

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4. CONCLUSION

This paper supports Douglas's insight that dirt is matter out of place and therefore socially determined. It argues that four significant paradigms (the domestic, the sacred and heroic, the art-historical, and the evidential) have been influential in conservation cleaning practice. The effects of the domestic paradigm are illustrated by examples drawn from literature. The sacred and heroic paradigm is illustrated by textiles linked to kings and presidents, notably Charles I and President Lincoln. The cleaning of a Coptic textile illustrates the effects of the art-historical paradigm. The new technology of DNA analysis illustrates the evidential paradigm.

The paper argues that decision-making is not purely scientific but, either implicitly or explicitly, reflects different contexts and attitudes. This means that the decision to clean, with the consequent implications for the preservation of both the artifact and associated, possibly significant, soiling should be a shared decision, involving different stakeholders including owners, curators, and conservators. It is hoped that this paper will contribute to this debate and will encourage the rationale behind the decision-making process to be recorded. Awareness that conservation itself is part of a social process is an indication of a mature profession in which decision-making is overt, justified, and well-documented.

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MARY M. BROOKS, MA, DMS, Dip. Tex. Cons, FIIC, ILTM, ACR, reader at the Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, is the program leader of the MA Museums and Galleries programs. She has worked as a conservator and curator in Europe and America. She was director of a research project funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Board "Innovations" program on "Smart and Techno Textiles," a collaboration between the Textile Conservation Centre and the Victoria and Albert Museum. She was a scholar at the Getty Conservation Institute in 2002, researching regenerated protein fibers. She has published widely and was an editor of IIC's *Studies in Conservation* from 1994 to 1996. Mary has a special interest in the contribution that object-based research and conservation approaches can make to the wider interpretation and presentation of cultural artifacts. Address: Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, Park Avenue, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8DL, UK; mmb1@soton.ac.uk

DINAH EASTOP, MA, FIIC, ILTM, ACR, is a senior lecturer at the Textile Conservation Centre, University of Southampton, UK. She is associate director of the AHRC Research Centre for Textile Conservation and Textile Studies. She was the lead applicant for and the founding director of the Research Centre, which is an interdisciplinary collaboration between the universities of Southampton, Bradford, and Manchester, UK. She coauthored *Chemical Principles of Textile Conservation* (1998, reprinted 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2004) with Ágnes Tímár-Balázsy; and co-edited *Upholstery Conservation: Principles and Practice* with Kathryn Gill (2001). She is interested in integrating the social as well as the physical sciences into textile conservation. Address: As for Brooks; dde@soton.ac.uk